

While the Rupert Murdoch News Corp., scandal is justifiably front-page news, there is a much wider problem with the mainstream news media.

Purchasing Reporters

Famed Watergate reporter Carl Bernstein says the CIA has already bought and paid for many successful journalists. (http://carlbernstein.com/magazine_cia_and_media.php).

A CIA operative allegedly told (http://www.amazon.com/Katharine-Great-Graham-Washington-Empire/dp/0941781135/ref=pd_rhf_p_t_1) Washington Post editor Philip Graham ? in a conversation about the willingness of journalists to peddle CIA propaganda and cover stories:

You could get a journalist cheaper than a good call girl, for a couple hundred dollars a month.

The Church Committee found that the CIA submitted stories to the American press:

The New York Times discusses (http://papercuts.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/23/the-cia-and-the-culture-war/index.html?hp_ in a matter-of-fact way the use of mainstream writers by the CIA to spread messages.

The government is paying off

(<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=journalists+paid+government&btnG=Google+Search>) reporters to spread disinformation.

A 4-part BBC documentary

(<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=%22the%20century%20of%20the%20self%22&oe=utf-8&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&client=firefox-a&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&hl=en&tab=vv#>) called the ?Century of the Self? shows that an American ? Freud?s nephew, Edward Bernays ? created the modern field of manipulation of public perceptions, and the U.S. government has extensively used his techniques.

The Independent (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/how-the-spooks-took-over-the-news-780672.html>) discusses allegations of American propaganda.

One of the premier writers (<http://www.dissidentvoice.org/2007/07/the-invisible-government/>) on journalism says the U.S. has used widespread propaganda.

Indeed, an expert on propaganda testified under oath during trial that the CIA employs thousands of reporters and OWNS its own media organizations. (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=C4rFXjGJ5os>) the expert has an impressive background (<http://youtube.com/watch?v=bbnxsPgcsH0&feature=related>).

Of course the Web has become a huge media force, and the Pentagon and other government agencies have their hand in that as well. (<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2011/07/pentagon-seeks-to-manipulate-social.html>)

Second Half Propaganda for the rich and powerful

But stories directly crafted by CIA and other government employees isn't the only form of prostitution. Popular MSNBC anchor Cenk Uygur was recently told to tone down his attacks on the establishment because the head of the network reminded him, "we're part of the establishment." (http://www.democracynow.org/2011/7/22/rejecting_lucrative_offer_cenk_uygur_leaves)

Newsweek's Evan Thomas admitted in 2009: (<http://www.newsweek.com/2009/03/27/obama-s-nobel-headache.html>)

By definition, establishments believe in propping up the existing order. Members of the ruling class have a vested interest in keeping things pretty much the way they are. Safeguarding the status quo, protecting traditional institutions, can be healthy and useful, stabilizing and reassuring?

"If you are of the establishment persuasion (and I am). . . ."

Virtually all mainstream reporters are "establishment" journalists like Thomas.

The Pew Research Center study on the coverage of the crisis found that the media has largely parroted what The White House and Wall Street have said. (http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/covering_great_recession)

The government, Wall Street and media all dispense happy talk when there is an economic crash. (<http://georgewashington2.blogspot.com/2009/05/happy-talk-can-not-improve-economy.html>)

Financial insider and commentator Yves Smith wrote an essay entitled "MSM Reporting as Propaganda" arguing that the government has been using propaganda to make people think that things are getting better, no one is angry, and "therefore" no one should get upset:

The message, quite overtly, is: if you are pissed, you are in a minority. The country has moved on. Things are getting better, get with the program? Per the social psychology research, this "you are in a minority, you are wrong" message DOES dissuade a lot of people. It is remarkably poisonous. And it discourages people from taking concrete action.

Arianna Huffington points out: (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/wall-street-dc-and-the-ne_b_201899.html)

There is something in the current DC/NY culture that equates a lack of unthinking boosterism with a lack of patriotism. As if not being drunk on the latest Dow gains is somehow un-American.

Or if ?shock doctrine? medicine is being pedaled by the powers-that-be (and see this), then overly fatalistic assessments are trumpeted on every channel.

(<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2011/07/debt-ceiling-crisis-being-used-as-shock.html>)

(<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2011/07/ron-paul-we-dont-have-to-cut-medicare.html>)

And the corporate media is instrumental in spreading the lies which support war.

(<http://www.washingtonsblog.com/2009/12/5-reasons-that-most-corporate-media-is.html>)

As has been noted there are five reasons the mainstream media is worthless.

1. Self-Censorship by Journalists

Initially, there is tremendous self-censorship by journalists.

For example, several months after 9/11, famed news anchor Dan Rather told the BBC that American reporters were practicing ?a form of self-censorship?:

There was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around peoples? necks if they dissented. And in some ways the fear is that you will be necklaced here, you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions?. And again, I am humbled to say, I do not except myself from this criticism.

What we are talking about here ? whether one wants to recognise it or not, or call it by its proper name or not ? is a form of self-censorship.

Keith Olbermann agreed that there is self-censorship in the American media, and that:

You can rock the boat, but you can never say that the entire ocean is in trouble ?. You cannot say: By the way, there?s something wrong with our ?. system.

As former Washington Post columnist Dan Froomkin wrote in 2006:

Mainstream-media political journalism is in danger of becoming increasingly irrelevant, but not because of the Internet, or even Comedy Central. The threat comes from inside. It comes from journalists being afraid to do what journalists were put on this green earth to do. . . .

There's the intense pressure to maintain access to insider sources, even as those sources become ridiculously unrevealing and oversensitive. There's the fear of being labeled partisan if one's bullshit-calling isn't meted out in precisely equal increments along the political spectrum.

If mainstream-media political journalists don't start calling bullshit more often, then we do risk losing our primacy ? if not to the comedians then to the bloggers.

I still believe that no one is fundamentally more capable of first-rate bullshit-calling than a well-informed beat reporter ? whatever their beat. We just need to get the editors, or the corporate culture, or the self-censorship ? or whatever it is ? out of the way.

2. Censorship by Higher-Ups

If journalists do want to speak out about an issue, they also are subject to tremendous pressure by their editors or producers to kill the story.

The Pulitzer prize-winning reporter who uncovered the Iraq prison torture scandal and the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam, Seymour Hersh, said:

?All of the institutions we thought would protect us ? particularly the press, but also the military, the bureaucracy, the Congress ? they have failed. The courts . . . the jury's not in yet on the courts. So all the things that we expect would normally carry us through didn't. The biggest failure, I would argue, is the press, because that's the most glaring?.

Q: What can be done to fix the (media) situation?

[Long pause] You'd have to fire or execute ninety percent of the editors and executives. You'd actually have to start promoting people from the newsrooms to be editors who you didn't think you could control. And they're not going to do that.?

In fact many journalists are warning that the true story is not being reported. See this announcement and this talk.

And a series of interviews with award-winning journalists also documents censorship of certain stories by media editors and owners (and see these samples).

There are many reasons for censorship by media higher-ups.

One is money.

The media has a strong monetary interest to avoid controversial topics in general. It has always been true that advertisers discourage stories which challenge corporate power. Indeed, a 2003 survey reveals that 35% of reporters and news executives themselves admitted that journalists avoid newsworthy stories if ?the story would be embarrassing or damaging to the financial interests of a news organization?s owners or parent company.?

In addition, the government has allowed tremendous consolidation in ownership of the airwaves during the past decade.

Dan Rather has slammed media consolidation:

Likening media consolidation to that of the banking industry, Rather claimed that ?roughly 80 percent? of the media is controlled by no more than six, and possibly as few as four, corporations.

This is documented by the following must-see charts prepared by:

Media Channel <http://www.mediachannel.com>

The Nation <http://www.thenation.com>

Free Press <http://www.freepress.net>

And check out this list of interlocking directorates of big media companies from Fairness and Accuracy in Media, and this resource from the Columbia Journalism Review to research a particular company.

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2870>

<http://www.cjr.org/resources/>